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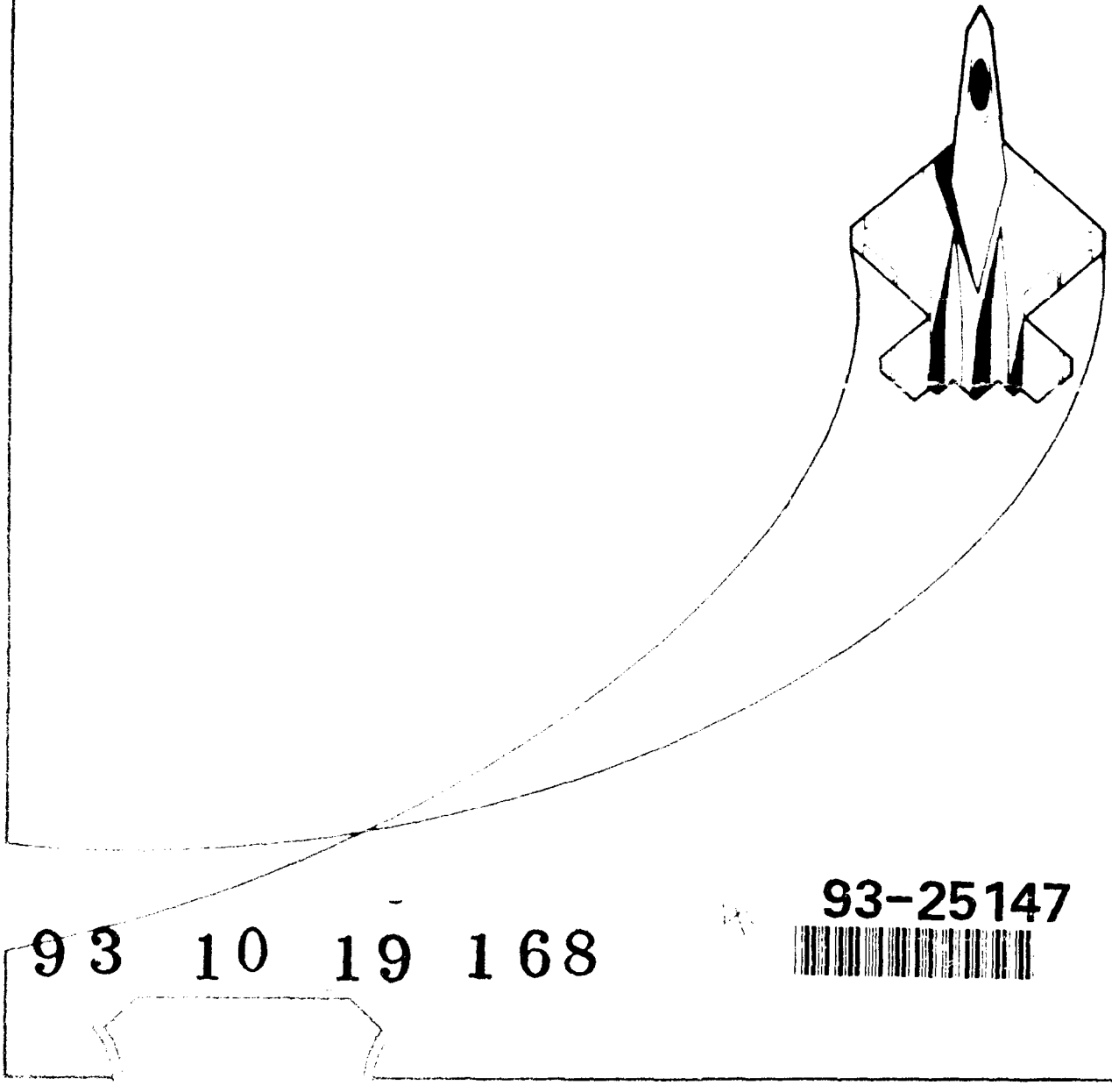

Toward an American Political-Military Policy for the Middle East in the Twenty-First Century

LEWIS B. WARE

Report No. AU-ARI-CPSS-91-8

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Foreword

The stunning changes in the complexion of international politics that began late in the decade of the 1980s and continue today will profoundly affect the American military establishment as a whole, and the US Air Force in particular. Decisions about the future course of the military will be made in the early part of the 1990s which will essentially determine the course of the US Air Force well into the next century. Decisions of such importance require thoughtful consideration of all points of view.

This report is one in a special series of CADRE Papers which address many of the issues that decision makers must consider when undertaking such momentous decisions. The list of subjects addressed in this special series is by no means exhaustive, and the treatment of each subject is certainly not definitive. However, the Papers do treat topics of considerable importance to the future of the US Air Force, treat them with care and originality, and provide valuable insights.

We believe this special series of CADRE Papers can be of considerable value to policymakers at all levels as they plan for the US Air Force and its role in the so-called postcontainment environment.

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Director
Airpower Research Institute

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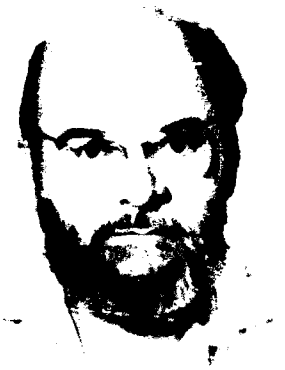

Dr Lewis B. Ware

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Executive Summary

This study defines the Middle Eastern security environment into the next century and, by reexamining American national interests, establishes the scope of a future Middle Eastern political-military policy for the United States. Proceeding from an analysis of the recent war against Iraq, the study clarifies the nature of regional instability and concludes that conventional war between states presents the least likely scenario for conflict when compared to the possibility for crisis represented by radical ideologies, such as militant Islamism.

Islamism recognizes no borders. It cannot be defined in the usual terms of state-to-state relationships. Islamism strikes at the heart of Middle Eastern society to effect radical social transformation by posing an internal threat to the Middle Eastern secular state system. Islamism also has ramifications externally for the global community. Therefore any containment of Islamism requires a reformulation of US interests in the context of not only a broad Muslim policy but, at the same time, of a more narrow subregional definition of the Middle East that accentuates the need for socioeconomic cooperative institutions to defend Middle Eastern nations from Islamic revolution.

This study argues that the US should base its Middle Eastern political-military policy on the reality of such institutions which will necessitate a restructuring of US military forces for regional deployment to meet the new unconventional security environment that the Islamic threat presupposes.

Chapter 1

Introduction

EVERYTHING in the Middle East is connected to everything else. Nowhere do American national interests intertwine more with the interests of friends and enemies than in this region which gives us no respite from crisis and conflict. Any significant American political, military, or diplomatic demarche in the Middle East occasions basic shifts in the relationships between the US and the regional nations. To say that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the success of Operation Desert Storm turned a new page in the history of these relationships is to risk gross understatement. The present situation has deprived us of familiar and solid ground for assessment. Against considerable odds to the contrary, the US succeeded in putting together a European and Arab coalition whose legitimacy was sanctioned by the United Nations. The coalition was comprised of partners whose military cooperation under any other circumstances would have been inconceivable. In waging war against Iraq, the US engaged for the first time in large-scale conventional military operations in the Middle East. Because the events surrounding these operations are unique, their ultimate political consequences will remain unclear for some time. We can be certain, however, of one thing: the traditional conceptual framework for American political-military policy in the Middle East will no longer be adequate to explain the new postconflict environment.

The time is right for a reformulation of the rationale behind the US's basic Middle Eastern position. If we keep our former views about this volatile region, we risk suffering a string of future political and military disasters that may ultimately compromise our national interests. We must ground the reformulation of our position in a firm understanding of the reasons for this present situation in the Gulf. We must understand what the war with Iraq tells us about the nature of crises to come, and how the management of those future crises will require a redefinition of regional conflict and a reappraisal of the geostrategic significance of our relationship to the region. Otherwise it will be impossible to reshape American national interests to the new Middle Eastern political and military environment, to show clearly how those interests may be translated into long-term diplomatic, military, or political action, and lastly, to assign a value to the employment of air power as an instrument of policy.

For this paper to deal with these issues, certain working hypotheses are presupposed which should yield conclusions that increase our understanding of Middle Eastern conflicts in the next century. First, we must direct our attention to the facts of the Kuwaiti crisis. On the surface, the crisis possessed all the hallmarks of a conflict of political and economic interests between two bordering states. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait had significance in the context of a conflict which emanates from the tension between fundamentally antithetical historicocultural forces that pit the West against the East, the haves against the have-nots, the industrialized nations

against the lesser-developed, and materialism against spiritualism.

Second, the civilizational and transnational nature of Saddam's concept of conflict suggests the contemporary US geostrategic perception of the Middle East is flawed. Up to now that perception has evolved within the framework of a regional response to superpower competition for strategic resources and dreams of global hegemony and has been measured in terms of formal and informal military alliances. At the same time, the superpower relationship has obscured the existence of regional causes for conflict, which some see as having retarded the evolution of a stable, secular political culture. Now that the Soviet-American rivalry has been altered, the tensions associated with the issues of regional political culture will increase in direct proportion to the decrease in superpower competition.

Consider, for example, that one of the most important issues facing the region today results from the environment for the growth of Islamic movements in competition with the Middle Eastern secular state. Inasmuch as Islamism considers the secular state politically illegitimate both in terms of Islamic law and as an extension of the imperial West, Islamism invites the US to review the basis for its geostrategic perception of the region and to recast US interests accordingly. The globalist perception of conflict may have been sufficient to explain the phenomenon of Middle Eastern instability in the past, but to grasp the dimensions of present conflict, we need a new framework of determinants for the exploration of regional issues. Developing this framework requires that we take into account the myriad socioeconomic and cultural problems faced by individual states as they evolve new political identities. This accounting will lead to a reconsideration of what we mean by the Middle East as a region.

Third, US national interests in the Middle East cannot help undergoing a process of redefinition. Saddam Hussein's militant anti-imperialism, his need to control Arab petroleum resources for such purposes, and the use of conventional military means to attain his goals represent a temporary diversion given the pandemic nature of other regional problems. The phenomenon of Saddam Hussein, it may be argued, is merely an aberration, considering the potential of other issues (such as extraregional demographic shifts of population, chronic economic insolvency, and the Palestinian problem), and should not have an impact on the direction of the political contest between secularism and religion.[1] Because such issues affect the long-term survival of regional states, not just as states, but as societies, they deserve to be called vital American interests. Under such conditions, the disposition of Middle Eastern petroleum resources can no longer be permitted to dominate the broader concerns of American national interests.

Fourth, the interests that will form the basis for a new long-term policy must not only meet the exigencies of new regional circumstances, they also must reflect an American commitment to the continuity of the Middle Eastern secular nation-state. This paper argues that such continuity is assured first by securing the state against internal aggression. Air power will continue to be a component of the conventional military response to the sporadic attempts by aberrant states to establish their hegemony in the region and will also retain its importance as an instrument of policy in the as yet latent confrontations with Islamism. In these

confrontations, air power will have to meet the criteria of a drastically changed conflictual environment. Describing the political and socioeconomic scope of that environment will aid this paper to determine the role of air power in the Middle East as we approach the twenty-first century.

Notes

1. On this point the author is in agreement with the cogent analysis of the Middle East specialist, Mark Heller, cited in Thomas L. Friedman, "What the United States Has Taken On In the Gulf, Besides A War," *New York Times, The Week In Review*, 20 January 1991, 3.

Chapter 2

The Nature of Crisis

BEFORE the Iraqi army actually invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990, there were already some signs of a shift toward armed intervention. In July, negotiations between Tehran and Baghdad were elevated from talk of an armistice to the discussion of a formula for peace between the two countries. The lessening of tensions on Iraq's eastern front permitted the reassertion, for the fifth time since 1961, of Iraq's sovereignty over the Kuwaiti islands of Bubiyan and Warbah, which dominate access to the Iraqi naval base at Umm Qasr. These demands were reasserted by Iraq's cl .n to the entire emirate by virtue of Kuwait's inclusion within the pre-World War I Ottoman Turkish administrative boundaries of the province of Basra, to which the modern Iraqi state professed to be heir. To compound the matter, Saddam accused Kuwait of siphoning off more than $50 billion worth of Iraqi petroleum from the Rumaila oil field which extends into Kuwaiti territory. He held Kuwait responsible for using its influence to fix the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) petroleum production quotas to deprive Iraq of the advantage of maximum production while violating those quotas itself. He also condemned Kuwait for conspiring with other Gulf producers to manipulate prices for the benefit of the US and its Western European allies. Moreover, Saddam complained that this treacherous behavior typified the actions of a country ungrateful for the assistance that Iraq had rendered to Kuwait in protecting it from Iranian invasion.

There is little doubt that Iraq's bellicosity toward Kuwait arose from a need to obtain maximum advantage from its only major source of revenue for the reconstruction of its prostrate economy. Only rapid economic recovery could translate the victory Iraq had won over Iran into Iraqi hegemony in the Gulf. Control over Kuwaiti production and reserves would serve to guarantee that purpose. It is not surprising that prior to the invasion, Saddam refused a negotiated settlement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members of OPEC. Given the GCC's propensity to purchase peace with its more powerful neighbors, it offered Saddam indemnification for Kuwait's alleged illegal exploitation of Iraqi oil resources. Saddam obviously wanted it all; he believed he had the right to take Kuwait's resources by force. In light of the signals received from the US which indicated that Washington would not intervene in what it considered a purely Arab affair, Saddam probably reasoned that he could seize Kuwait with impunity.

When Washington decided to oppose Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Saddam immediately sought to rally Arab support against Kuwait, her Arab Gulf neighbors, and the United States. By this means, he attempted to circumscribe the crisis. Arguing that his actions were purely a matter for Arab adjudication, he sought to capitalize on the Arabs' distinct dislike for the Kuwaitis. He miscalculated in the same way he had miscalculated Iranian

strength on the eve of his invasion of Iranian territory in September 1980. The Arab consensus not only did not materialize in his favor, it was left shattered after both Egypt and Syria joined the American-led coalition against him.

The subsequent insertion of American, European, Arab, and other allied troops into Saudi Arabia under a United Nations (UN) mandate authorizing the use of force to eject the Iraqi army from Kuwait made war a distinct possibility. Weaving into the crisis symbolic pan-Arab and Islamic threads, Saddam began to incite the Arab peoples to revolt against their leaders.[1] The crisis, he claimed, was not of his doing. Rather he was responding, much like Saladin responded to the Crusaders, to the perfidy of rulers who represented the interests of the Western imperialists in their quest to dominate the Arab peoples and crush the truth of their Islamic faith. Thus Saddam characterized the crisis as a conflict of right against wrong, of Allah's teaching against false religion, and of the downtrodden against the imperial oppressor. Because the Arabs have been a model for steadfast faith in God, God had chosen them for a special role in the great struggle that will unite them, and by extension all humanity, in opposition to the depredations of demonic America, its Arab stooges such as the Arab unbelievers—Muhammad Hosni Mubarak, Hafiz al-Assad, and King Fahd. This struggle will liberate the Palestinians from Zionist oppression whose interests these false Arabs serve. The struggle is pan-Arab and progressivist. Iraq's state role is to be in its vanguard. Saddam's personal part is to lead the pan-Arab and Islamic struggle against the Zionist enemy and thus to deny the Zionists the resources of the Arab world. To this end Saddam declared, early in the conflict, a *jihad* against all unbelievers whose soldiers were now marshalled against him across the Saudi Arabian border in the land of the Muslim holy places.

The call to *jihad* is significant. For Saddam *jihad* does not mean simply a "holy war" of Iraq against those who he claims have violated its sovereign national rights; he means to invoke a "struggle in the path of the One God" of the entire Arab people against their oppressors. Saddam implies that the Arab people are a single people, that their unity is not a matter of philosophic speculation but of objective reality, that coexistence with oppression is impossible, and that the oppressors must convert to the new world order. Similarly, the US president has evoked a "new world order" less ideologically well-defined than Saddam's vision but dependent, nonetheless, for its realization on Saddam's demise.

Saddam's ideology draws on the historical tension between Islamic and non-Islamic civilization, but recasts and refurbishes that tension in the pan-Arab idiom.[2] Saddam is seeking to re-create the old community of belief—the Islamic *ummah*—along contemporary pan-Arab, anti-imperialist Baathist lines. The instrument of the Arab anti-imperialist Baathist struggle is revolution. In speaking of revolution, Saddam is not invoking the mechanism of exchanging one set of political institutions for another; he is invoking the thoroughgoing revolution that transforms the historical personality of an entire people.

Such transformation may be ignited by a spontaneous coup that topples unjust rulers or by an armed force that obliges the imperialists to withdraw their presence from the Middle East. As an instrument for its realization, the Baathist state must intervene in social life to regulate society's economic and political progress toward human betterment. This humanistic impulse reflects a pacifistic and inward aspect of *jihad*—

al-jihad al-akbar (the "greater jihad" mentioned in the Quran).

By relegating to the state the higher purpose of reforming in secular terms the Islamic *ummah* through the renewal of faith in itself as the best of all communities, Saddam's Baathism easily appropriates the language of Islam. In that way it is perfectly congruent with a program for both Iraqi internal national development and the salvation of all the Arab-Muslim peoples.

But because these temporal and spiritual purposes overlap, the Iraqi state possesses a certain degree of artificiality. On one hand, these purposes promote the strength of the Baathist state in Iraq. On the other hand, they encourage the socioeconomic, political, and cultural transformation of an entire historical community across national boundaries. Inasmuch as Iraq must lose its institutional raison d'être when power finally devolves upon the historical Arab community, the Iraqi state is a transitory phenomenon. Whether Saddam Hussein actually believes that this process will unfold according to this teleological design is irrelevant. *Jihad* affords him an important instrument of social control over the Iraqi population. At the same time, it legitimizes his immediate anti-imperialist goal.

The Arabs are no exception to the rule that every people has its myth of mission. Before Saddam Hussein sought to universalize the Arab myth of mission, Gamal Abel al-Nasser tried to erect the pan-Arab edifice on the foundation stone of Egyptian one-state nationalism. Later came Muammar Qadhafi, whose striving to inherit Nasser's mantle has so far met with no success. Today the Syrian Baathist party under Hafiz al-Assad competes with Iraqi Baathism for pride of place as legatee of the pan-Arab ideal. With the defection of Egypt from the pan-Arab ranks after 1979, however, no state has been thought powerful enough, no army large enough, and no leader strong enough to shake significantly the center of gravity of contemporary Arab political culture. Yet contenders abound for the crown of Arabdom who continue to attempt the impossible. They follow the same path: they raise a secular nationalist philosophy centered on a single state to universal ideological significance; they couple pan-Islamic pretensions to pan-Arab unity politics; they adopt the style of charismatic leadership; they make liberal use of military force to achieve their ends; they attempt to establish their hegemony over resources; and they exhibit an inordinate hatred of the West and of Israel which they believe to be the surrogate of the West and the author of all the ills of the Arab world.

One cannot be certain of the connection between Saddam's transnational politics of Baathist revolution and the invasion of Kuwait as the first step in the conquest of the Gulf. Within days of the invasion, Saudi sources reported that the Iraqi army had made some tentative military probes of Saudi territory for which the Saudi authorities received no sufficient explanation. On the basis of those incursions, the Saudis rationalized an appeal for American support. But was Saddam contemplating an invasion of Saudi Arabia? Was he taking the first step toward the creation of a regional pan-Arab Baathist empire ruled from Baghdad?

Saddam had demonstrated no ability to support his army in a posture of power projection outside Iraq's borders. In addition to the military limitation on freedom of action, Arab political culture has opposed the hegemony of a single state or leader over the Arab world. While Saddam may have expressed the popular will, he nevertheless divided Arab governments over the Kuwaiti issue. This illustrates what can happen when an ambitious leader oversteps his bounds, becomes isolated, and finds himself

severely constrained in the scope of his actions. But if he could not build an empire, Saddam did not give up hope of imposing his views on the regional regimes through a combination of economic and military pressures. It can be argued that, to Saddam's mind, the conquest of Kuwait was simply the most provocative means of convincing Saudi Arabia and other local states that Iraq now occupies the dominant position of power in the Gulf.

Saddam could not establish Iraq's hegemony without first freeing the region of Western interests by driving a wedge between Israel and its Western supporters, between the US and its Arab clients, and between the moderate and the radical Arab states. To this end he was willing to take risks that not only threatened the survival of his own regime but might also have destabilized those regimes which succumbed to his blandishments. For instance, he had pressured the Mauretanian government to permit the construction of a missile-testing site in return for military equipment which the Mauretanians could use against the Polisario insurgency.[3] By the same token, he offered chemical weapons to the Sudanese government for its war against southern sucessionists.[4] This was a gesture whose potential for destabilization Egypt did not misinterpret.

Menacing as these actions may be, we must ask whether Saddam's military capabilities were equal to his political purpose and therefore implied their use. The answer is a qualified *no*. We have no reason to think, despite the crisis in Kuwait, that Saddam Hussein would have succeeded in altering significantly the regional power balance where other competitors like Syria and Egypt have failed.

In the final analysis, Iraq's threat to the region and beyond the region—and by extension, the threat exercised by Iraq's competitors—is strategically problematical. Saddam's version of the Baathist credo, for all its attempts to co-opt ideological universals and populist power, demands for its political actualization the motivating force of the secular state. Saddam preaches transnational Baathist revolution to the Arab masses but aims his message to the Arab nation-state. For its success, Baathist revolution requires an elite, a vanguard, and an army. Revolution fomented against the Arab nation-state from the outside is not sufficient; what is required is a long period of socializing the values of the masses to the values of the elites to close the gap between state and society. That is a much more difficult task.

Ideologues such as Saddam also encounter the formidable competition of Islam within Arab society itself. Traditional Islam today claims the right to define the pan-Arab national polity. Unlike secular Baathism, Islam makes no distinction between society and state. The state emanates from the *ummah*, a society of unitarian belief and salvation regulated by divine ordinance. With the success of the 1979 Khomeinist revolution in Iran, Islam has assumed the form of a political ideology that, in denying the legitimacy of a political culture constructed around the concepts of secularism, ethnicity, language, and race, aims to transcend the state because it recognizes no permanent national boundaries. Anchored in the traditional concept of a universal Islamic *ummah*, this Islamism strives actively to supersede all competing ideologies for transnational value.

In sum, Saddam Hussein's actions are directed toward both the West and the Arab world. The West opposes him because of the damage he can do to Western geostrategic and economic interests in the region. Egypt and Syria, the only other important Arab states which can foil his plans, are attempting to restore a favorable balance to the Arab political

system that Saddam has disrupted. In addition to these constraints, Saddam must also deal with the rising force of Islamic movements throughout the Muslim world which he is seeking to wed, through the application of a proper formula of co-optation, to Iraqi state power. For the moment, the thread common to all of Saddam's activities is a hatred of the West and Israel. Yet however pervasive that hatred may be, the fundamental disparity of views between secular Baathism and Islamism will still remain a principal bone of contention in the Middle East.

Notes

1. Excerpts from an Iraqi statement declaring a "War of Right Against Wrong," *New York Times*, 7 September 1990, A7.

2. See my contribution to the forthcoming CADRE Paper on "War and the Conflict of Cultures."

3. "Concern Over Iraqi Missile Sites in Mauretania," *Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)*, Africa edition 90-095, 16 May 1990, 14.

4. "Iraq: The African Effect," *Africa Confidential* 31, no. 17 (24 August 1990).

Chapter 3

Redefining the Region

SADDAM'S adventurism represents the first stage of a larger transnational crisis in the region. No state will be able fully to control this crisis; the next stage of which is already in preparation as the increasing weight of politicized religion gathers critical revolutionary mass. The failure of Khomeini to export Iran's version of Islamic revolution demonstrates that Arab Islamism springs from indigenous cultural roots and therefore can work from inside the Arab political system.[1] It is a force that, on the level of the relations between populace and polity, questions the validity of the answers to the problems of regional power that Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait has sought to resolve. Conventional military deterrence may effectively halt the progress of Saddam's designs in the Gulf or may eliminate him altogether as a threat. But it will be useless to redistribute power inside those Arab countries where conflict centers on the Islamic debate concerning the nature of the state.

Today there is no Arab country which has not experienced a resurgence of Muslim political sentiment. Even Israel has witnessed, in the wake of the October 1990 Temple Mount affair, the reappearance of a unique role for the Islamist Hamas organization that was once thought submerged in the ongoing Palestinian *intifadah*.[2] Since the early decades of this century, Islamic revivalism has strived to articulate a clearer political alternative to the emergence of the Arab nation-state, especially after the post-World War II decline of European colonial power and the creation of the Israeli state. In the 1930s, the Egyptian Muslim Brothers were the first organized revivalists, and their influence spread rapidly throughout the Arab Sunni Muslim world. The argument of the revivalists evolved slowly from a position in which the secular elites and the revivalists delineated sharply their spheres of influence in society to a position where their respective aspirations could be achieved only with the exercise of exclusive political power over the state. The Muslim Brothers set the stage for this transformation. Their activities stimulated the proliferation of Islamic movements wherever local conditions sharpened the lines of demarcation between religious and nonreligious social elements.

These numerous Islamic movements were wide-ranging in their views of the nature of society and the place of Islam. Some movements sought to create a counterculture in which secular state control over Islamic life according to Quranic precepts would be significantly reduced. On the other hand, some movements felt that the secular state had an obligation to ensure the proper functioning of an Islamic life through the restoration of the Islamic code of law. Others believed that an Islamic life could not be realized without the radical replacement of the secular state by a government based on Islamic law in the style of the Khomeinist Islamic revolution in Iran. These movements are similar in the degree they assign blame for the decadence of Islamic life on the culture,

socioeconomic and political influence of the West and its Israeli surrogate. Islamism, in general, remains opposed to regimes of secular Western inspiration.

The danger lies not in the revival of Islamic values or in an Islamic way of life but in the approach of radical Islamists to a theory of state. The nearer the radical Islamists draw to the revolutionary solution, the less likely they may be able to devise programmatic means for the substitution of an Islamic government in its place. This does not mean that Islam as a theory of state is inherently nonprogrammatic or unable to meet the demands of modernity; it does, however, underscore the fact that the way a movement chooses to seize power often influences the choice of subsequent political institutions. The liberating force of an Islamic revolution which aims at the destruction, not only of a state but of its underlying culture, often elevates moral and doctrinal ties of a shared religious code to the sole constituent factor that binds together the institutions of state. This invariably produces a state without adequate representation for nonreligious opinion, the guarantee of liberty to dissent, and the means to implement other remedies for problems of social justice. The needs that Islamic revolution serves in so doing are certainly less socioeconomic than they are psychological. Such revolutions attempt foremost to reassert individual and corporate self-worth. Nevertheless, the fact that a society under threat of Islamic revolution may be economically depressed and its people socially alienated from the ruling elites and institutions will add fuel to revolutionary fires.[3]

Even if the Islamists' demand for the total overthrow of Arab secular society has a revolutionary mission, the means to this end may not necessarily require anarchic violence. The present Islamic movements in Algeria and Tunisia, for example, have signified that they can accept democratic procedures to bring about radical social change. This does not signify that radical Islamism is inherently democratic—only that certain Islamist movements have been socialized, especially in societies where limited democracy is already ingrained in the political culture, to use democratic means to exercise their strength. The problem lies with the reluctance of secular authority to include in the concept of political pluralism the enfranchisement of Islamic political parties. Political legalization would enhance the Islamists' potential to win through the ballot box what they have not attained in the streets.

Confrontations between the state and the Islamic opposition are already brewing. In Algeria, for instance, the legal Islamic Salvation Front has gained control of 55 percent of Algerian municipalities in free and open elections but cannot persuade the government to dissolve the National People's Assembly where only the ruling party is represented. The Algerian dilemma highlights the limits of accommodation between Islamism and secular Arab regimes. Because of the pressure of Eastern European *perestroika* and the subsequent change in the relationship of the Soviet Union with the US, secular regimes realize that national survival depends on an ability to restructure their internal and external socioeconomic institutions. Thus, what happens in Algeria may be crucial for the destiny of the secular state in the Arab world.

While it is unreasonable to believe that an international body exists with plans for the establishment of Islamic power throughout the region, this does not make Islamism any less dangerous for future stability. For decades Islamism has been infiltrating Europe as the number of Muslim laborers from North Africa, the Middle East, and Southwest Asia increases to fuel the industrial development

of Germany, France, and Great Britain. The demographic shifts from south to north have been set into motion not by crises such as the one Saddam Hussein provoked but by the inequities of global economic growth. Those workers who have made their homes in Western Europe have not been fully integrated into Western life. Neither have they been reabsorbed into the economies of their native countries. As Islamism furnishes the vehicle for Muslim protest, it provides the forum for these displaced workers to challenge authority at home.

Europe is experiencing a foretaste of such challenges. The federation of Yugoslav republics may fall apart at any moment. The disintegration of Yugoslavia reflects the political problem of integrating ethnic minorities into a federal structure made shaky by socioeconomic inequality. But more than that it underlines the failure of its Muslim and Christian populations to coexist. Thus could begin another flight of refugees, similar to the recent demographic shift to the west of East German refugees. From the point of view of its effect on the progress of Islamism in Western Europe, such a flight could add to the strains already present in the European Economic Community which is now in the throes of a full economic and political transition.

Saddam Hussein's vision of an Arab world unified under the secular banner of pan-Arab Baathism can survive competition with Islamism only to the extent that Saddam is able to project his military and political power outside the Gulf. Such projection of power is restrained not only by the practical limits of the Iraqi economy and society to support national armed forces but also will be circumscribed by the challenges from other national or subnational actors in the Arab political system. The conditions that apply to Saddam in this respect will apply in a greater or lesser degree to his competitors. Whatever the outcome of the present crisis may be, we have no reason to believe that the exercise of conventional military force will lead to more than a temporary political advantage.

US policy must take into account the Islamic component lacking in its regional policy assessment and devise ways to deter the spread of Islamism. Conventional military intervention will be powerless to reverse the changes that Islamism seeks to make within the political body of each regional state. Any policy that uses only conventional military solutions for deterrence will fail. This view does not imply that the deterrence of Islamism has no military aspect; on the contrary, force can be used as an instrument of policy. The structure, deployment, and employment of force must be tailored to meet the circumstances of the Islamic threat. US success requires a policy that has a reformulated strategic and geographic definition of the Middle East.

If Islamism aims at restoring psychological, moral, and social wholeness to the *ummah*, then the Islamists' discontent feeds on the unsuccessful means employed by the secular regimes to provide for a common prosperity. The growing power of the European Economic Community jeopardizes the fragile economic equilibrium of every Middle East nation. For the foreseeable future, the energies of Middle Eastern states will be invested in the restructuring of their economies to meet the challenge of a politically and economically integrated Europe in which their products and the export of their manpower face strong discrimination. In this way Middle Eastern states hope to deprive Islamists of the issues that have permitted them to delegitimize national authority.

Several existing subregional organizations recognize the interrelationship of these competing global issues. These organizations bring together adjacent nations that share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, political, and economic af-

finities. They also suggest that the evolution of future common market zones and structures conducive to the reorientation of interregional and international trade may evolve under their auspices. These organizations may one day replace the individual state as the principal political actor and furnish a framework for the protection of their members from Islamist subversion.[4]

Presently there are three subregional economic organizations of this kind: the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) composed of the sheikhdoms of the Gulf and Saudi Arabia; the United Arab Maghreb (UMA), comprised of the four North African Arab countries with the addition of Mauretania; and the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC), constituted of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and the newly unified Yemens. It would be naive to think that the countries making up these organizations do not have ulterior motives which only concerted action under a common political umbrella can satisfy. On the other hand, it would be unfair to question the economic necessity of these organizations. It would be equally unfair to question that common socioeconomic problems can be resolved cooperatively on a basis of mutual respect for individual sovereignty, but remember that these countries presently impede free access to each other's markets. These organizations are by no means a perfect answer to Middle Eastern issues. The absence of Syria and Lebanon from the ACC and the inclusion in it of Iraq, which by rights ought to belong to the GCC, seems to indicate that the rationale for cooperation favors short-term political expediency. If these organizations are underpinned by commonly shared, enduring, economic realities, then the possibility exists that they may become the keystones for future subregional mutual security arrangements.

The enormity of the task of postconflict reconstruction in the Middle East should encourage the US to strengthen these new subregional economic alignments. A formal US policy must reflect American interests in the independence and interdependence of each nation within its subregional community, in the satisfaction of individual national needs, and in the negotiation of commonly shared concerns. The successful reorganization of the Middle Eastern region into these smaller, more flexible subregional socioeconomic units will undercut the appeal that Islamism makes for a politically radicalized Arab-Muslim collectivity. The secular Middle Eastern regimes will run the greatest risks in the transition to new regional cooperative institutions since, to rationalize the structures by which subregional economic organizations can succeed in reorienting internal and external trade, national political and economic liberalization must take priority. This means, paradoxically, that the very Islamists who threaten to destroy secularism have to be guaranteed a participatory stake in evolution toward a new order. Without Islamist participation, any secular state involved in the shift toward new subregional structures can expect their uncompromising opposition.

Notes

1. For a fuller treatment in the context of the regional Islamist phenomenon see my article "Low-Intensity Conflict in the Middle East," in *Low-Intensity Conflict in the Third World*, ed. L. B. Ware (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, August 1988), 1.

2. On Hamas see my remarks concerning the *intifadah* in *Responding to Low-Intensity Conflict Challenges* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, December 1990), 5–23.

3. The psychological aspect of this issue has been explored with insight by Susan Waltz, "Islamist Appeal in Tunisia," *Middle East Journal* 40, no. 4 (Autumn 1986): 651–70.

4. See also Madeleine K. Albright and Allan E. Goodman, "US Foreign Policy After The Gulf Crisis," *Survival* 32, no. 6 (November/December 1990): 540.

Chapter 4

Reexamining United States' National Interests

THE long-term threat to the Middle East does not arise from dictators who try to justify a domination of their neighbors by marrying state power to pan-Arab ideology. Long-term threat arises from the struggle of radical politicized religion against the regional secular state system—a system that has been weakened by the ambitions of men like Saddam Hussein.

Therefore, this study suggests that Saddam's *pan-Arabism is constrained* both by Iraq's limited resources for power projection and by the divisive nature of Arab political culture. It also argues that radical Islamism, rooted in the historical consciousness of profoundly conservative peoples who believe their way of life to be under attack from without, possesses a far more dangerous, revolutionary potential. If so, US national interests in the Middle East demand a thorough reexamination.

The reaction of the US administration to Saddam's invasion of Kuwait has exposed the confusing, narrowly-defined, and overlapping reasons for US intervention in the Gulf and for remaining there after the resolution of the crisis. We may well ask which interest—protection of the oil lifeline, economic health of the Western industrial democracies and Japan, opposition to Saddam's aggression, restoration of the status quo ante in Kuwait, defense of Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, or consolidation of a "new world order"—justified this action.

It may be argued that a monopoly of control over Gulf petroleum reserves by any one local regime has not offset the mechanism of supply-and-demand which has regulated the projection, supply, and price of oil on the international market since the inception of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).[1] Even the radical members of OPEC, such as Iraq, Libya, and Algeria, historically have not been able to punish the West by setting an exorbitant political price on oil. Such intentions have provoked countervailing measures for increased production and supply among OPEC's moderate partners. Combined with conservation efforts on the part of the major importers, these measures have often resulted in a market glut and a decline in petroleum prices. The major importers may dislike the fact that a regime inimical to their interests may gain political capital through an expansion of physical control, but this can only temporarily interrupt oil supply. The oil market is too large, too diversified, and too important to the reconstruction plans of all the producers to accommodate for long a concept of artificial price manipulation.

Despite these facts, the US has assumed the principal role in creating a coalition to counter the possibility of Saddam's monopolization of regional oil reserves in the aftermath of conflict. On the other hand, world opinion has interpreted American domination of the alliance as the spearhead of Western

neocolonialism to deny the unfettered exploitation of these resources by their rightful owners. The Arabs, and even some who joined the alliance, understand that American opposition to Saddam exists because of the involvement of oil and the significance oil possesses for short-term US economic recession. If not for this involvement then the Iraqi invasion would bear as little American scrutiny as minor eruptions between neighboring African countries.

Since the US has an interest in the defense of Saudi Arabia, it cannot disregard threats to the integrity of the Saudi regime, but the US did not make a convincing case that Saddam's intention in invading Kuwait was the overthrow of the Saudi ruling house. If such had been Saddam's design, the massing of a large US offensive force for the protection of the regime and the reestablishment of the status quo ante in Kuwait would have constituted an appropriate reaction. Yet in protecting Saudi Arabia and in pledging itself to the reestablishment in Kuwait of a regime detested for its economic niggardliness toward its brother Arabs, the US made itself vulnerable to the charge of supporting reactionism for its own political purposes.

The US administration explained that Saddam Hussein's aggression stood in the way of a new world order and intimated that his elimination must be the first test of that order's viability. Inasmuch as US policy has failed to enunciate clearly the political and socioeconomic dimensions of such a world order, many Arabs contend that this order is the creation, under the guise of international sanction, of American global hegemony in the absence of Soviet competition. Since the US gives the impression of having won the cold war, the Arabs believe that it will now claim the sole right to play the role of global policeman. Or, in the event of Soviet-American entente, both the US and the USSR will form a condominium over the region. Either way, the Arabs believe that the new world order points to American domination of the Middle East, and therefore by proxy, further Israeli aggression.

The point this study is attempting to make is not that American opposition to Saddam Hussein is wrong, nor that the interests threatened by Saddam are not valid concerns for American policy. The point is that, in view of the long-term prospects for regional instability outlined above, our present interests are shortsighted. These interests are controlled by immediate events of uncertain consequence to which we have reacted out of a need to appear firm at a time of transition to new global sociopolitical and economic relationships.

In sum, this study proposes that our principal interest in the region for the foreseeable future ought to focus on deterring the spread of radical Islamism. That interest cannot be framed in a coherent policy unless Americans reconsider their view of the Middle East.

That view must first embrace the idea that Islamism can be deterred by developing new economic relationships between Middle Eastern nations and that those relationships can only be redefined as new forms of subregional cooperation. Second, the value of oil as the sole determinant of the future politics of regional economic cooperation is misplaced. Third, the conventional defense of oil supply lines by a single power is politically untenable. Fourth, the East-West regional competition of the past four decades has been superseded by a north-south socioeconomic confrontation. Fifth, future regional conflicts will erupt not so much between states but between governments and their peoples over the nature of the social contract. Sixth, conventional military responses, such as Operation Desert Storm, will be exceptions rather than the rule of crisis management.

Notes

1. For a full analysis of this argument and other subsidiary issues see Robert H. Johnson, "The Persian Gulf in U.S. Strategy: A Skeptical View," *International Security* 14, no. 1 (Summer 1989): 122–60.

Chapter 5

Framing Policy

THE process of framing a regional US policy would benefit from an understanding of Islam and its relation to contemporary Middle Eastern political culture. On the highest levels of policymaking, Middle East specialists have not yet made an enduring contribution in a consultative role, and on the level of policy implementation they remain underrepresented despite the perennial nature of the Middle East crises. All levels of command in the military abound with an ignorance of Islam and its relation to a concept of conflict. Without specialized study, no political-military body can evolve a consistent policy. For future policy to work in the field, only diplomats and soldiers trained to resolve problems from a common frame of reference can form successful country teams.

Properly trained Middle East specialists of the future should consider as the first tenet of US policy a clearly articulated statement of the conditions under which the US will intervene in Middle East crises. Despite our professed aim to intervene as keepers of the fragile Middle Eastern peace, we are invariably perceived to be participants in the internecine struggles that only Middle Eastern political culture can generate.

In the aftermath of the Kuwaiti crisis, the presence of American troops to protect the passage of oil out of the Gulf will provide the focal point for radical Islamist politics against the West. To diminish the hostage value of oil and the cycles of regional violence which the threat of stoppage perpetuates, the US must decide to make domestic energy independence the adjunctive arm at home of a policy of nonintervention abroad. Independence does not signify increased exploitation but instead signifies conservation married to the use of alternative technologies.

Even if US energy independence could be achieved, the world's developing countries will need access to oil. Continuing need for oil will render the Middle East permeable to any actor who, for whatever reason, finds the control of regional resources politically or economically expedient. It will be impossible for the US to intervene in every future conflict in the Gulf as it did in the Kuwaiti crisis. To avoid the political and economic implications of responding to the perennial call for help against outside intervention, the US should encourage the Middle Eastern oil producers to protect their own resources by forming viable and credible military security arrangements within the purview of their cooperative organizations. The GCC will be a test case for such new policy initiatives.

The US role in a GCC military security initiative must be that of a peer with both the GCC participants and with its European and Japanese allies in the training and arming of regional security forces. The US must try to avoid dominating the participants or linking them to extraregional unilateral or multilateral military alliances. The US and its allies can sponsor a firm treaty relationship among GCC without officially joining it in much the same way that the US related to the Central Treaty Organiza-

tion. Even though one day a post-Saddam Iraq and a postrevolutionary Iran may wish to participate in the GCC military arrangements, initial security arrangements of the GCC will be directed toward the menace that Iraq and Iran represent to the stability of the Gulf. Perhaps the greatest irony of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is that since this crisis should lead to future international controls over the proliferation of conventional arms in the Middle East, a future regime like Saddam's will likely be impossible to implement.

Military training and arms transfers will not suffice, however, to make the GCC or other regional security organizations capable in the long run of independent self-defense. If such organizations are to train and work together with a coordinated command and control structure, share burdens equitably, make political and economic decisions as peers and invest the concept of sovereign control of resources with a sense of shared purpose, then they must accomplish two tasks. First, they must rationalize their economic and juridical structures to facilitate economic exchange and second, they must allow for a greater political pluralism to reduce the distance between state and society.

The risks are certainly great for the oil-rich sheikhdoms which comprise the present GCC. The risks are no less great for Tunisia which is a member of the UMA and, apart from Iraq, all the states of the ACC. These states have little petroleum and much less wealth in other resources to fall back upon in times of crises. They have depended principally on their oil-rich brothers for development capital and to employ the growing population of workers whom their own shrinking economies have not been capable of absorbing. The present situation in the Gulf has rendered this dependence even more uncertain. If these populations are not to succumb to the blandishments of the Islamists for an Islamic economy and an Islamic state, their national governments will require greater financial aid than ever before from the US, Western Europe, and Japan. More than simple aid, the diversification of their products, the free competition of those products in a regional and global market, and a nondiscriminatory policy toward the emigration of their excess labor abroad will have to be worked out. The industrialized nations can further these ends by easing trade barriers between the Middle Eastern subregional economic organizations and the West and Japan, removing onerous loan restrictions, facilitating interregional exchange, and providing opportunities for freer movement of labor along the north-south axis.

Many critics complain that such cooperative policies will be unlikely given the burden which the reconstruction of the Eastern European economies has placed upon the West and Japan and the tendency toward protectionism that is likely to ensue as part of a reactive economic nationalism. The intractability of these problems pales in comparison with the conflicts that may erupt between the global haves and have-nots, between the Muslim East and non-Muslim West, and between the former colonial dependencies of Europe and their former imperial overlords.

To sum up, a new US policy for the Middle East should consider

- the abandonment of a unipolar view of global politics under American hegemony in the name of a clearly defined new world order;
- a concept of subregional economic cooperation and the promotion of all actions to support subregional integration;
- that the principal challenge to Middle Eastern security comes from within a weakened and unreconstructed Arab state system rather than from outside it;

- that the US must rethink its concept of deterrence to avoid politically damaging and costly unilateral or coalitional military interventions; and

- that there exists an intimate connection between US domestic socioeconomic weaknesses and its Middle Eastern policy objectives.

Chapter 6

A Future Political-Military Role for the United States in the Middle East

THIS study challenges the assumption that all future Middle Eastern conflicts will exhibit the conventional character of the recent Iraqi war. On the other hand, this study does not argue that because of these assumptions there exists no military dimension to Middle Eastern conflict and no role for US armed forces, particularly the Air Force. Interstate conventional conflicts may break out in the Middle East by the turn of the century. Such conflicts are likely to occur when contiguous states dispute their rights to shared natural resources and after adjudication by subregional cooperative organizations fails to produce results. The wars provoked by such disputes may be immensely destructive but not necessarily decisive in the military sense. Only in the case of conflicts where the strategic interests of external actors become involved will there be the opportunity for outside intervention. In the near term three scenarios for such intervention seem likely.

The first scenario foresees a conflict over water rights between Israel and a Palestinian state formed from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Water reserves are already being exhausted in Israel proper. As a consequence, Israel has turned to the expropriation of West Bank water for its own needs. Because of the interconnected nature of the hydrological systems of the Yarmuk, Litani, and Jordan watersheds, the distribution and use of water among the riverine states would be affected and may once again provoke a state of war between Israel and its neighbors.[1] The future political relations between the US and Israel over this issue, the direction of which nobody can accurately predict, will determine the American military role.

A second scenario may bring Egypt, the Sudan, and Ethiopia to war over the equitable utilization of Nile water. In past years, Israel has been mending its fences in Africa and especially in Ethiopia where Israel has interests in ensuring the emigration of the remaining Ethiopian Jewish community. Moreover, the Egyptians have reasonable fears that Israel is helping the Ethiopians to construct dams on the White Nile as a hedge against the possibility that Cairo may one day join an anti-Israeli military coalition. Only in the event that Israel interferes directly in the dispute over Nile water, and thereby becomes the focus of such a coalition, would a US military role appear necessary.

A third scenario involves the equitable access of Turkey, Iraq, and Syria to the waters of the Tigris-Euphrates river valley. Turkey is presently pushing forward in its determination to attain participatory status in the European Economic Community, which reflects the logic of its economic potential and the need to protect its labor force abroad. To realize a degree of economic integration in the European community, Turkey must harness the waters of the Tigris-Euphrates system, which rise in its southeastern provinces, for the expansion of its national industry and agricul-

ture. The partial damming of the headwaters of these two great rivers has reduced the flow downstream to both Syria and Iraq, the agriculture of the latter being especially vulnerable. Up to the present time, negotiations have been unsuccessful in establishing a formula for the distribution of these waters, thus raising the specter of a future military confrontation. Should the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) adopt an out-of-region military orientation, US intervention on the Turkish side would be highly probable.

The aforementioned scenarios assume that due to the possibility for such conventional conflicts, the US will experience a need to accommodate its unipolar position of conventional military power in the Middle East to the regional politics. If under the best of circumstances this would be a difficult feat to accomplish, how much more difficult will it be to accommodate a policy to scenarios of the radical Islamist threat to local regimes which this study considers much more likely to occur?

The struggle with Islamism will be a protracted, low-intensity conflict for political advantage, waged on the urban and rural fronts without recognizable battle lines. The object of this struggle will not be simply to overthrow one regime and replace it with another but will be to provide a fertile ground for total social and ideological change. Radical Islamists will employ revolutionary means to achieve their ends. Terrorism, civil disobedience, boycott, political and psychological delegitimization of the regime in power, avoidance of direct armed confrontation with authority, diplomatic pressure on the regime's allies abroad, destruction of the regime's economic resources at home and its ability to enter into treaties—all of these are the weapons belonging to the present-day radical Islamists.

The need to contain these internal revolutionary forces underlines a second function that subregional cooperative organizations may perform in guaranteeing the continuing stability of the region. To provide a mutual security arrangement for the protection of its members against the hegemony of an external power is, of course, the main purpose of such organizations. Yet one should remember that any gains in political and economic cooperation between states automatically translate into a greater capacity of each state to resist homegrown revolution. The benefits, therefore, of subregional collective security may be political as well as military.[2]

The US must never lose sight of the political purposes and ramifications of any military aid it renders to collective security organizations. Creative American diplomatic intervention on the subregional level remains the preferred tool for internal conflict management no matter how much local regimes may want a purely military solution. For US military support to complement diplomatic activity, it must offer not only technological support but must also train local forces to combat the revolutionaries. US foreign military assistance should be to arm and to educate; that is, to teach local forces not only how to combat dissent but why it is important to clearly distinguish among the varieties of threat. In the final analysis, it is we who have to understand the true nature of our interests in the Middle East and how our policy articulates those interests before we can convince Middle Eastern states that we share common purposes.

The Air Force has a unique mission to perform in these future conflicts. That mission emphasizes air power in the supporting mode. Unfortunately, that mission rubs across the grain of present-day air doctrine, strategy, tactics, and command-and-control structures. And yet the history of low-intensity conflicts,

such as those that will face Middle Eastern nations in the next century, shows convincingly that air power has been used most effectively in nonfirepower roles—reconnaissance, transport, liaison, and especially intelligence gathering—in whatever capacity is necessary to facilitate the mobility of other combat, paramilitary, or police arms.[3] The gathering and coordination of intelligence ranks high because it allows the Air Force to use its surveillance assets from space as well as from the air for the purpose of denying the countryside as a base for operations against cities if conflict ever reaches the stage of open insurgency. By the same token, airborne counterinsurgency teams can be formed, equipped, and trained as part of the effort to destroy the coordination of urban and rural insurgents and to pacify areas of dissidence. It goes without saying that tactical airlift and a light, close-support aircraft used in an auxiliary ground-support role would be extremely useful to these efforts.[4]

This role hardly conforms to the contemporary image of an air force configured in the tactical and strategic mode to make an immediate and decisive impact on the winning of conventional wars, such as the one we have recently fought in Kuwait, through a combination of supersophisticated, high-performance, multipurpose fighter aircraft and standoff, precision-guided munitions. Moreover, the task is not one that belongs by right to the air force alone; the army, navy, and marine corps have their part to play in combined arms operations which will improve the chances of local forces to accomplish their mission successfully. The navy can train the regime's coast guard to ensure that in the case of open insurgency the country remains invulnerable to infiltration from the sea. The army can train the regime's police and paramilitary forces to carry out operations in urban and rural environments. Marines can be held in readiness offshore to intervene at the invitation of a regime that feels itself incapable of surviving. All these initiatives must be generated from a foreign internal defense program according to a political-military policy that avoids to the utmost degree possible the permanent or semipermanent basing of US combat personnel on foreign soil.

The above argument proposes that unilateral US military intervention be limited, as far as possible, to the equipping, training, and assisting of local forces in the execution of combined arms, paramilitary, and counterinsurgency operations. This position should be framed within a US policy for the Middle East that, in acknowledging the multipolar nature of the regional diffusion of power and recognizing the primacy of the ideological threat to the internal stability of the regional nations, accepts the political liability of a prolonged American conventional military presence. That such a policy implies the reconfiguration of US military forces for use in the Middle East, and in particular of air force assets, should give clear direction to the next generation of military planners.

Notes

1. See also Graham E. Fuller, *The West Bank of Israel: Point of No Return?*, Rand Report R-3777-OSD (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corp., August 1989). This author accepts without reservation Fuller's assertion that a West Bank Palestinian state is inevitable.

2. See also Jasjit Singh and K. Subrahmanyam, "Post-Crisis Management of Security," *Strategic Analysis* 8, no. 7 (October 1990): 845–52. Indian scholars are already thinking of the implications of the postcrisis environment for the creation of subregional units of cooperation. Although they recognize that a grave threat may erupt from religious fundamentalism, they believe, politically speaking, that presently constituted organizations such as the GCC, ACC, and UMA will not be capable of dealing effectively with internal problems. Instead they suggest a restructuring of the region under the aegis of broader institutions like those of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) or the

UN or, at the very least, that the GCC, ACC and UMA use the good offices of these organizations to coordinate regional security.

3. David MacIsaac, "Voices from the Central Blue: The Air Power Theorists," in Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 644.

4. The debate over the place of light aircraft in the evolution of a doctrine of modern air power is as old as the US Air Force itself. Robert Frank Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force*, vol. 1, *1907-1960* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, December 1989), 308–10.